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# SERVICE

## USDA'S REPORT TO CONSUMERS

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE · OFFICE OF INFORMATION · WASHINGTON, D.C. 20250

APR 25 1966

January 1966

CURRENT SERIAL RECORDS

No. 25

### FOOD FACTS

The Cost of Eating. How much you spend for food depends to a large extent on the number of people in your family. And the more there are, the less it costs to feed each one. A single person last year spent an estimated \$13 a week for food, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Yet a family of six or more spent only \$38. If yours is a family of two, you probably spent about \$22 a week; three, \$28; four, \$33; five, \$36.

Less Time for Eggs. A morning cup of coffee--no time for anything more. A sedentary job--no need for a big breakfast. Too busy--no time to bake. These are some of the reasons why egg consumption has dropped in the past 15 years. It's the mad pace of modern living. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, per capita egg consumption has gone from 393 eggs in 1951 to 307 in 1965.

Down the Drain. Do you pour nutrition down the drain? You do if you throw out the liquids in which you cook vegetables, meat drippings, and the liquids from canned foods. The U.S. Department of Agriculture suggests you put these in gravies, soups, sauces and gelatin dishes. You'll be adding nutritive values and interesting flavors to your cooking.

They Still Decay Away. Gamma radiation isn't the answer to retarding decay in fruits and vegetables--at least not right now, U.S. Department of Agriculture scientists find. Only figs and strawberries keep fresh longer when treated with gamma rays. Apples, avocados, grapes, nectarines, olives, oranges, peaches, pears and plums soften and shrivel, and lose both flavor and color.

Food Consumption Down. When's the last time you plucked a chicken? Churned butter? Shelled peas? These jobs are now done for you. You get only the final product. With no waste. And that's one reason why food consumption figures are down--nearly 200 pounds per person since 1909. The other reason is simply that Americans are now eating less--400 fewer calories each day.



## AROUND THE HOUSE

The Roof Over Your Head. Building or remodeling your home? Before deciding how to top it off, consider these new products and materials. They're worth looking into, say housing specialists at the U.S. Department of Agriculture. (1) For roofs of unusual contour, there's a compound that's sprayed, painted or rolled on, then dries to a water-proof, weather-resistant film. (2) Roofing of laminated plastic rolled on over an adhesive. (3) Asphalt shingles with an adhesive edge applied at the factory. When fastened in place, the sun helps to set the adhesive so the shingles become wind and water tight. (4) Gutters of solid vinyl that require no painting; steel gutters with a galvanized finish that takes paint better.

Housing Help. Rural folks who need a better place to live now have a better chance of getting assistance from the Federal government. The Housing and Urban Development Act of 1965 has given USDA's Farmers Home Administration more leeway in extending aid to rural people. The three major changes made this year--changes that might make you eligible for housing aid--are: (1) Farmers Home Administration now insures (as well as makes) loans to individual families. (2) Any rural resident (not just those 62 or older) may now get aid in buying a building site or previously occupied home. (3) The definition of a rural area has been enlarged to include towns with as many as 5,500 people--providing the town is "rural in character."

In-Door Surprise. Aladdin had his lamp, Midas had his touch, and you can have a magic door that holds all sorts of goodies. The U.S. Department of Agriculture has designed a closet door equipped with shelves--to hold canned goods, extra boxes of cereal and crackers, almost anything you want to store there. The door is much like that on your refrigerator--only it's for a pantry. Equipped with shelves that slant toward the back of the door and a caster to support its weight, the door can be installed on your kitchen broom closet or out-of-the-way in the basement. For a leaflet showing the door equipped with shelves--and food--and directions for making it, send a postcard to the Office of Information, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C., 20250. Ask for MP-1002, "Workrooms," and be sure to include your ZIP code.

## ALONG THE HIGHWAY

Underground Activities. There's subversive activity afoot. And it's going to rob America's youngsters of one of their favorite pastimes--counting telephone poles along the country roadsides. Telephone poles--and wires--are going underground. And for two very good reasons: To make America more beautiful and to cut costs. It's less costly to bury the lines than install them overhead, and there's less maintenance costs--no damage from snow, ice or low-flying aircraft. Service is better, too. Fully 70 percent of the telephone lines erected this year by systems financed by USDA's Rural Electrification Administration will be buried. Meanwhile, REA's electrical engineers are knee-deep in studies which they hope will result in more underground electric distribution lines.

## SHOPPING TIP

Pick the Plentifuls. Here are the foods to watch for--and buy--during January: Pecans, grapes, onions, potatoes, oranges, red tart cherries in the can, grapefruit, apples, cabbage and split peas.



## THE CLOTHES YOU WEAR

Darn It! A stitch-in-time means fewer clothing replacements and more money for other needs. So get a copy of the new U.S. Department of Agriculture booklet on "Clothing Repairs." It's full of good basic sewing information. It explains the various stitches, tells how to turn a collar, replace a cuff, repair frayed seams. Over a hundred photos and diagrams illustrate how to do it. For a free copy of "Clothing Repairs," HG-107, send a postcard to: Office of Information, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C., 20250. For quick handling, include your ZIP code.

Washday Worry. Can you depend on cold-water detergents killing the bacteria in your laundry? Definitely not, say textile bacteriologists at the U.S. Department of Agriculture. You have to use a disinfectant as well--either chlorine in the wash cycle or a quaternary compound in the rinse. In one family's laundry, the bacteriologists found that 20,000 bacteria per square inch survived cold-water washes; only 1,600 a hot wash. But--with the addition of chlorine or a quaternary disinfectant--the bacteria count was cut to 40 or less per square inch, regardless of water temperature. The moral, of course, is: Use a disinfectant when you wash--whichever way you do it--especially if there's sickness in your family or neighborhood, or if you use a public washing machine.

Hair-Raising Stunt. The same electrical force that makes your hair stand on end when you comb it in cold, dry weather is being put to use in a USDA cotton laboratory in New Orleans. A high-voltage electrical field stands cotton fibers on end, making it easy to sweep just the long strands from the field and into the spinning bin. The short fibers that remain go into the trash where they belong. Short fibers create weak spots in yarn. Currently, between 5 and 12 percent of most cotton is short fibers. This many shorties make spinning troublesome and expensive. Without them, consumers can look for better quality cotton goods, possibly, even at less cost.

## FOR THOSE WHO SPEAK SPANISH

¿Habla usted Espanol? The wise old owl who tells consumers to shop carefully for credit now speaks Spanish. "Sea prudente," says the owl. And then tells Spanish-speaking people how to shop for credit and compare credit costs. You'll find him perched high in a tree on the front of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's "Consumer's Quick Credit Guide"--the first consumer publication of its kind to be printed by USDA in a foreign language. For a free copy of this wallet-size folder, in English or in Spanish, write to the Office of Information, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C., 20250. Use a postcard and include your ZIP code. Be sure to specify which version you want. For bulk copies (at \$2.50 per 100) send your order to Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 20402.

## COMMENT

The Free Lunch. A judge in a large midwestern city says free lunches are helping to cut truancy in his city's schools. When the School Lunch Program recently was expanded in 12 schools--so that those who could not afford the lunches got them free--attendance rose 6 percent.

## PEST CONTROLS

10, 11-epoxyfarnesenic acid methyl ester. It's absolutely supercalifragilisticexpialidocious--this new chemical developed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. It mimics hormones that control the normal functions of insects, thus opening the way to a whole new area of pest control. In USDA tests, one-billionth of an ounce, applied to pupae of yellow mealworm, prevented them from developing into adults. Female cockroaches, treated with the chemical, produced eggs that developed normally even though surgery had made them incapable of producing the hormone that naturally induces egg development. So far only these two insects have been tested. But the scientists say the chemical has exciting possibilities.

Population Explosion--in Reverse. Take a 1,000-acre plot infested with 200,000 boll weevils. Apply seven insecticide treatments in the fall. You'll kill off 98 percent of the weevils. Then in the spring, add 200,000 sterile males to the remaining 2,000 males and 2,000 females in the plot. Now you have a ratio of 100 sterile males to 1 fertile female--and you'll get only 200 offspring. Add another 200,000 sterile males, and it's goodbye boll weevils. It's scientifically possible, says Dr. Edward F. Knipling, who directs entomology research for the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Dr. Knipling urges a concerted drive for "total control," using the latest techniques everywhere at once--locally, regionally and nationally. This method has been tried successfully with screwworms and 4 species of fruit flies. And though it's neither easy nor cheap, it is substantially less costly than the partial-control methods now used and the continued large crop losses. It also avoids or minimizes hazards to people and animals.

Foiled Again. It takes only five seconds for a disease-carrying aphid to infect a plant. And no insecticide can work that fast. In fact, the greyish color of some insecticides actually attracts aphids. Not so with aluminum foil. Aphids hate it. That's why U.S. Department of Agriculture scientists have been growing squash, cucumbers and watermelons in beds spread with foil. The result: No aphids. Stronger, faster-growing plants. Five-fold larger yields. It's a trick that could be used in your garden.

## RECREATION

Signs in the Snow. Pick a color, pick a shape. It is your guide to safe skiing. A new set of colored signs--standardized and simple--now tell skiers what type of slope they're tackling. Square and green means slow and easy--a trail for beginners. A yellow triangle indicates a little harder slope. A blue circle, "most difficult." Look, too, for the red diamond that spells extra caution, and the orange octagon that warns the area is closed to skiers. These signs are now being used to tell the trail from Squaw Valley to Franconia Notch. They have been adopted in all National Forests and most other ski areas across the country. So schuss and slalom in safety this year during National Ski Week--January 22 through 30.

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SERVICE is a monthly newsletter of consumer interest. It is designed for those who report to the individual consumer rather than for mass distribution. For information about items in this issue, write: Jeanne S. Park, Editor, SERVICE, Office of Information, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C., 20250.